

# More Recipes

I sent some recipes to my sister and since I had to type them into the computer anyway, I will post them on my blog. The first two are great for Thanksgiving, and the last one is a yummy version of lasagna that is great for moms to make because you can do the preparation while the kids are napping or eating lunch, and then it will cook all day in the crock pot. Also, you make it with cottage cheese instead of ricotta cheese which can be expensive. Enjoy!

## **Pearl Onions in Cream Sauce**

1 – 10 oz pkg red or white pearl onions, peeled according to package directions

3 TBL butter or margerine

3 TBL flour

1 1/2 cups milk, heated almost to boiling point

2 TBL cream sherry (optional)

1 drop tabasco sauce

dash ground nutmeg

white pepper and salt to taste

chopped parsley for garnish

To cook pearl onions, drop peeled onions into boiling water. Cook for 10 mins. and drain. To make cream sauce, melt butter or margerine over medium-high heat. When melted, add flour, stirring constantly with wire wisk, until all butter is absorbed. Turn heat to low and add milk slowly (make sure to continue stirring with the wire wisk). Add sherry, tabasco sauce, nutmeg, pepper and salt. Fold-in cooked onions and mix well. Before serving, garnish with parsley. Variations: When folding cooked pearl onions into cream sauce, add 3/4 cup cooked green peas. Makes 4-6 side dish servings.

## **Sweet Potatoes With Blue Cheese and Pecans**

4 lbs sweet potatoes

3 TBL olive oil

6 sprigs thyme or 1/2 tsp dried

1 cup pecans  
1 cup blue cheese

Combine sweet potatoes and oil in a roasting pan, sprinkle with thyme. Roast for 30-45 min at 425 or until tender. Transfer the sweet potatoes to a serving bowl. Gently toss with pecans and cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with remaining thyme. Serves 6.

### **Crock Pot Lasagna**

1 lb lean ground beef  
1 onion, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, smashed  
1 – 28 oz can tomato sauce  
1 – 6 oz can of tomato paste  
1 tsp dried oregano  
1 tsp salt (approx.)  
12 oz uncooked lasagna noodles  
12 oz cottage cheese  
1 cup parmesan cheese (approx.)  
16 oz shredded mozzarella cheese

In a skillet, cook ground beef, onion and garlic until beef is browned. Add tomato sauce, tomato paste, oregano and salt. When sauce is thoroughly warmed, spoon a layer of the meat sauce into the bottom of the crock pot. Add a double layer of uncooked lasagna noodles, breaking to fit if necessary. Top with a layer of each of the cheeses. Repeat process until sauce, noodles, and cheeses are gone. Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hrs. NOTE: My lasagna began to overcook a little before 4 hrs in the crock pot!

---

# Brain Fart = Abandoned Child

I'll start right off with the excuses. I have a lot going on right now. My October is booked solid. I've adopted the philosophy to just take one thing at a time because if I try to think about it all at once, I will end up breathing into a paper bag. Last week, my focus was on my daughter's 2nd birthday party – inviting guests, buying supplies, getting the house ready, etc. I decided to put this week on the back burner last week and not try to do things to plan for our trip to Florida we're taking at the end of this week.

So this morning, I got up and when I went to check my oldest daughter's backpack for school, she said Dad had already signed her papers that needed to be signed – which is why I missed the memo. All was well, I thought, until the school called our cell phone. It was RIF week at my other daughter's school (Reading is Fundamental), which means parents can come in and read books to the class. Normally we would just drop off our daughter and be on our way, but of course today we stayed at the school for awhile to read books, which is why my other daughter's school called our cell phone – thank goodness we had picked up the lost cell phone at the corn maze place Friday night – see one of my [previous posts](#) if you're curious about the adventures of the cell phone.

So anyway, they were calling to tell us that today was Columbus Day, there was no school, and could we please come pick up our daughter. Talk about embarrassing. I realize it happens; everyone forgets something now and then, but why did it have to involve one of the kids? And I'm out of good excuses – I'm not pregnant anymore or recovering from surgery or anything like that... just an average, run-of-the-mill brain fart. It's not a big deal; we retrieved my daughter, and both she and the people at the school were laughing about it (and probably will be for years to come). But this really stinks because this is really bad for the way my mind works. I'm

obsessed with detail and constantly worried about forgetting things; I'm always trying to relax about these things but when something like this happens, there's a little voice in my head that says, "See? Look what happens when you weren't so obsessive about details!". Oh, well... the good news is today my oldest is perfectly happy spending time with her little sister, and likewise. So without our trouble-making middle daughter around (she had school today – or did she?!? I was at the school with her, but now I better double check!), they should get along quite well giving me some much needed catch-up time for housework and vacation packing. So why am I sitting here blogging?!?

Here's a footnote – it's now later in the day, I was able to sort thru some of the accrued clutter in our house, and I found a newsletter from my daughter's school. Guess what? October 13 is not listed under important dates in the newsletter for having a day off! So there! Not completely my fault! I can transfer 2% of fault to the school!

---

## Blindness

[Blindness](#) is an interesting movie starring [Julianne Moore](#). Think [Outbreak](#), except this time the disease that's afflicting people at a record rate isn't fatal, but it causes sudden blindness. The movie was alright; I liked the ending, but there are a few scenes that are extremely disturbing to watch. As always, I don't want to go into much detail to avoid spoiling it for people. Julianne Moore is a great actress, and her performance in this movie is not an exception to her reputation as such. She plays a woman who does not contract the disease, therefore she still has her sight but she pretends like she doesn't in order to be able to stay with

her afflicted husband. There were several large flaws with the movie (and the husband's character), but it was entertaining and thought-provoking; never a bore. Would I recommend it? Probably not to the average movie-watcher, but if you like disaster films, medical dramas, or if you just want to see what a large city would look like if it were abandoned by all that could see, leaving only thousands of blind people, then check it out. But I'm warning you, the view of the city isn't pretty, and at times, neither was the movie.

---

## **Parents                      Just                      Don't Understand?**

Some of you may remember the '80's song called "Parents Just Don't Understand" performed by a musical act called DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince – the Fresh Prince is known nowadays as an actor named Will Smith. But anyway, the song was about teen angst and how parents just don't understand teens. What I'm talking about is something completely different – see the below story about the woman who threatened to post naked pictures of her daughter's ex-boyfriend (the kids are 13!) on the internet as blackmail in hopes of getting the pair back together. Talk about parents just don't understand! This lady doesn't understand values, morals, or appropriate social conduct just to name a few things. Not to mention the fact that things don't seem to be wired right upstairs, and that's an understatement. My children will not be dating at 13, and they will not have cell phones for any purpose outside of emergency or family use only at that age. I would never try to get my daughter "back together" with a boy, especially at 13, and if I were ever unfortunate enough to come across such

pictures, I, like most people I'm sure, would turn them over to authorities instead of conspiring to use a child's mistake against him and put him in danger. And perhaps the kicker? The woman is a teacher. Well, *was* a teacher... There is so much wrong with this story, I'll let you sort out the details:

***Chicago Tribune – October 8, 2008***

*An Elgin woman is under investigation in connection with a strange—and possibly criminal—campaign to reconcile her 13-year-old daughter with a former boyfriend.*

Authorities say she threatened to publish nude pictures of the boy on the Internet unless he contacted the girl.

The 42-year-old woman reportedly peppered the Sleepy Hollow boy, also 13, with phone calls, e-mails and thousands of text messages aimed at reuniting the young couple, according to a search warrant and affidavit filed late last month. The Tribune is not naming the woman because she has not been charged.

When those tactics failed, the woman threatened to publish photos online of the naked teen that he had sent to her daughter via cell phone, the records say.

"It's odd, to say the least," said Kane County State's Atty. John Barsanti, who said the woman is under investigation. "It's not a fact pattern we normally come up against."

The woman could face charges of child pornography, intimidation and harassment, the documents say. Police seized cameras, computers, cell phones and other items from her Elgin home and the private school where she works. The boy received 12,302 text messages from the woman between January and July, according to records. The boy's family contacted police in late August.

The girl's brother also took part, allegedly threatening to go to the boy's parents with the pictures unless the boy saw the

girl twice a week, according to records.

On Sept. 23, the woman left a message warning the boy she would “send the pictures and video of him to his teacher and minister to show them he is not a nice person,” the search warrant stated.

Oh, and this mother’s job at the school? She’s a teacher.

---

## **Giving Memories...**

I just got back from a gathering of friends. This gathering was celebrating the 2nd birthday of a wonderful little girl. Now of course the parents said that gifts were not required, so I didn’t buy any. Instead, I handed out memories to the 4 children of my friends. These were very specific memories for me and my children. It is hard to pass on memories when only one side knows what they are. So I am writing about those memories so, if the parents desire, these memories can be passed on to their children.

My wife collected three things during our marriage. One collection was pets, mostly chinchillas. Another was raccoons. When it got tough to find different raccoons, she started collecting Eeyores. Yes, that little gray (blue) donkey that Disney made so popular. The one from the Pooh Bear stories. For those who don’t know it, Eeyore was a gloomy little donkey, who had the most down to earth, sad, outlook on life. Except for the rare occasions when he found good in the bad things that happened. It is that rare gift to find the good during the bad times that captivated my wife with this character, other than the fact she thought he was just soooo cute.

Our house was filled with Eeyore things. Eeyore jewelery, clothes, dishes and cups and of course the stuffed Eeyores. There was an Eeyore for winter, Christmas, Summer, Fall and spring. There is even a Halloween Eeyore. Eeyores of every shape and size. These filled the house and our lives.

After my wife died, some of the Eeyores went to family members. I gave her sister a dress Eeyore watch, since she likes Eeyore too. I gave some stuffed Eeyores to my daughters and niece, so they could have something to hold on too. I gave at least 1 Eeyore sweatshirt to each daughter, so they could have something warm to wrap up in. Most of the stuffed Eeyores I kept and I held onto them for me. The Eeyores never left the family until today.

I gave 4 small donkeys to the children of my friends. 1 was especially for babies, so their youngest could have one too. Two were identical donkeys, (not quite Eeyores) that were bought by my children (ok, it was Dad's money) to give to their Mother for some special day. A fourth was one my wife would carry with her to give a little comfort in times of stress, this one was given to the birthday girl.

These were gifts of fond memories that we had as a family. These were not expensive, but they are gifts most rare. These were gifts of the heart. From one family to another, a shared blessing of the good things in life: Love, commitment, honor, trust and just a bit of pessimism.

Always looking for hope, and sometimes I happen to find it

---

# Warm Fall Days, Cool Fall Nights

These are days I now enjoy. Just a couple of years ago, this time of year was devastating to me. It was a time of year I called the beginning of the end. Somewhere around this time of year is when my wife started having neck and shoulder pain. No known cause, it would come and go. Sometimes severe, and sometimes not. It wasn't until mid November that we actually knew the cause of the pain was Cancer. I don't dwell on that as much now, I am now able to see some of the good times from that last year and other fall days and nights.

This was always the time of year for hot beverages in the evening. Tea, hot cider, coffee on occasion, and when it got just a touch of frost in the air hot chocolate would be made. This was also a time for Chili, Stews and Soups. The heat of the summer was fading, and hot meals were more desirable. Cooking didn't seem like the chore it was in the summer. Sitting close on the couch huddled under a throw, because we just didn't want to turn on the heat just yet. Making that first fire in the fireplace. Sharing wine, laughter and our own comforts. These days are fondly remembered.

Walking in the fallen leaves, breathing in that fall smell. Listening to the crunch of the leaves. Watching animals prepare for winter. Taking in a corn maze or two. One more trip to the local zoos before we had to bundle every one up. Unscheduled days off, just because the weather was beautiful that day. Memories of a special time of year.

This year finally removed some of the shadow that had fallen hard on this time of year. Maybe, just maybe some of the shadows will be lighter as the year comes back to that one fateful day.

Life goes on and some peace makes its way back in.

---

## More Screams And Other News

Tonight, the haunted house regulars (minus one) returned to [ScreamAcres](#) following last weeks travesty of [Terror Town](#). ScreamAcres was by far the BEST attraction we have been to this year. And since a few naysayers laid the kibosh on ANY attraction site we had been planning be it a month long extravaganza or a one weekend well conceived plot, we still continue to create our own feast of fright. This time, we had more groupies with us to add to the terror. You know... the thing I enjoy most about this haunt is the fact that there were even more human actors within the corn mazes, buildings, the entire attraction. Especially if you go through more than once. Two of us made a second journey through the gallery of horror and one of us became the "go to" person for the actors to scare and they did a good job of it. They pick up on something and then go with it and tell the other actors via well hidden communication devices to play it up... and they remember us... do we stand out that well?

When I returned home, there was a message on the machine from the director of *Don't Hug Me*. Short, sweet, and to the point. "I'm sorry to tell you and you did a great job and all but we decided to go with the other three guys who tried out." Perfectly understandable. As I told a friend moments later, two no-casts out of 10 attempts in less than 3 years is not a bad percentage... correct? I'm sure the show will be a great success. Plus, I would be worried about missing the first rehearsals and trying to memorize my lines within days of being cast because I will be in Florida with some of my best friends. Better to be a little upset after getting home from

a great night rather than trying not to spoil everyone else's evening by being a bit down.

---

## Could you send in a plumber?

They are having more [toilet problems on the International Space Station](#). Seems that the Russian made space toilet is not working. I realize that the water hunger, gravity fed toilets that work on earth would not work very well on the Space Station, but to break down twice in a short period of time is not good at all. I would really reconsider working on the space station if the main toilet is going to break every 4 to 6 months. Seems like that would be a vital function. Especially when some of the water used on the Space Station comes from recycling the waste collected in those high-tech privies.

Oh well, that massive water recycling program in use on the space station would also give me pause to send in my resume for Space Station Tech.

Where are the days when the astronauts would just play with their food in the micro-gravity situations. I miss the Jello floating in the air.

---

**$y=mx+b$**



My three day assignment that was cancelled earlier this week

would have been at the school I wound up at today. You can say it turned into a one day assignment I suppose. Oddly enough, the teacher I would have subbed for was the "team teacher" in two of the classes. In those classes I of course acted as an assistant, but I did get to teach four classes. I couldn't let the opportunity pass by and I mentioned the three day assignment to her and she told me she just rescheduled because she didn't like taking days off in October. I didn't ask why, but conferences are around this time I think so that's a possibility.

So the four classes were run pretty much the same way though they were actually two different levels. The regular math classes were working on percent markups and discounts. Given a cost and a percentage, they had to determine the final price. The other two classes were algebra. They were working on graphing equations and determining solutions from the graphs. I actually got a high complement in one of these classes. One of the students told me I taught this better than the regular teacher. I didn't know what else to say but to just thank him. So... Besides the last class having a couple of characters in it (I expected it, being a class of just eight students, and one of the regular classes as opposed to algebra) it was another pretty good day. First period was one of the two "team teaching" period, so Just watching for the one period and seeing things not in the plans definitely helped here in keeping with the routine though I suppose being eighth grade they wouldn't have had a tough time adjusting to a different routine if necessary.

It is now the start of a three-day weekend and time to get some rest...

---

# Teenagers Driving You Crazy?

Then drive to Nebraska and drop them off. For good. Seems Nebraska has a “safe haven” law like a lot of states, however, they are the only ones to have neglected placing an age limit on the kids who are left at the safe havens. These laws are designed to protect the safety of unwanted infants, encouraging mothers to drop them at hospitals instead of getting scared and doing something horrible and regrettable to the babies. Most states set their age cap at 72 hours, but since Nebraska failed to set a cap, they are seeing an influx of people dropping off their troublesome teens, including people who don't even live in Nebraska! Read about it below:

*(CNN) – Frustrated parents are dumping their teenagers at Nebraska hospitals – even crossing state lines to do it – and the state Legislature has scheduled a special hearing to try to stem the tide.*

*A 14-year-old Iowa girl was left Tuesday at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska.*

*Nebraska's “safe haven” law, intended to allow parents to anonymously hand over an infant to a hospital without being prosecuted, isn't working out as planned.*

*Of the 17 children relinquished since the law took effect in July, only four are younger than 10 – and all four are among the nine siblings abandoned by a man September 24 at an Omaha hospital.*

*On Tuesday, a 14-year-old girl from Council Bluffs, Iowa, was abandoned at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska, just across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs. The case marks the first time a parent has crossed state lines to abandon a teenager in Nebraska, authorities said.*

*“The few situations we've seen so far demonstrate the need for a change in Nebraska's safe haven law,” Gov. Dave Heineman*

said in a statement Monday. "In the coming legislative session, I will advocate for changes that put the focus back on protecting an infant in danger. That should be our priority."

All 50 states have safe haven laws, but only Nebraska's lacks an age limit. Nebraska's part-time Legislature is adjourned until January, but two state legislative committees will hold a joint hearing November 13 to discuss a remedy.

"They've got a huge problem," said Linda Spears, vice president for policy and public affairs for the Child Welfare League of America. "It's a pretty poorly constructed law to meet its original intent."

When it was introduced in the Legislature, the bill had a presumed age limitation of 72 hours, said Todd Landry, director of the state's Division of Children and Family Services.

"The original intent was to protect infants from the immediate danger of being harmed," he said.

However, the law's final language uses the word "child" and does not specify an age limit, leaving it open to interpretation. Other states' laws specify the maximum age at which a child may be relinquished, ranging from 72 hours in several states to 1 year in North Dakota, according to the National Center for State Courts.

"Clearly in these cases so far that we've seen, none of these children were in any immediate danger of being harmed," Landry said. "It is our opinion that the law does need to be modified."

The law is being abused, Heineman's statement said.

"Safe haven laws were not designed to allow families having

*difficulty with older youth and teenagers to abandon their children or responsibilities as parents," he said.*

*The parents may not always be to blame, the Child Welfare League's Spears said.*

*"The original safe haven laws were created for young moms who are having babies who didn't know how to get help. I think these are families with older kids who don't know how to get help and who are in desperate need," she said.*

*Most state laws fail to provide for research into who is abandoning babies and why, league spokeswoman Joyce Johnson said.*

*"Those are the kinds of things we've been wondering about and saying we need to know more about, and you'll never know if you just have a law that says you can anonymously leave a child somewhere, no questions asked," Johnson said.*

*New Jersey, she said, is an exception. That state's safe haven law provides funding for research and evaluation as well as \$500,000 a year for public awareness, according to a September 2007 report by a New Jersey safe haven task force.*

*A woman who dropped her 15-year-old nephew at a Lincoln, Nebraska, hospital told CNN affiliate KETV last month that she and the boy's guardian could no longer handle his behavior problems. Watch woman explain why she left 15-year-old at hospital »*

*The woman, Cathy Poulin, said she tried discipline and medication, but nothing worked. The boy's mother died several years ago, and his father left him, she said.*

*"We had to go to the next level," Poulin said. "He can be made to get help."*

*The Omaha man who left his nine children, ages 1 to 17, at Creighton University Medical Center was overwhelmed by the*

*sudden death of his wife after the youngest child was born, he told KETV.*

*“I was with her for 17 years, and then she was gone. What was I going to do?” Gary Staton said. “We raised them together. I didn’t think I could do it alone. I fell apart. I couldn’t take care of them.”*

*Staton is just the kind of parent whom safe haven laws fail to help, Johnson said.*

*“He was grieving, he didn’t have a lot of money, and all those children – he was trying to figure out how to feed them, how to clothe them, and deal with the grief of losing his wife. He needed help,” she said.*

*Heineman and Landry urged Nebraska parents who are having trouble coping to call the United Way’s 211 resource line or Boys Town, a nationally known nonprofit child services organization based in Nebraska.*

*Other options include community and faith-based support groups, crisis hot lines, treatment centers and other services, Landry added.*

*By Jim Kavanagh*